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RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA PRIORITY  
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7858  
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SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - PAKISTAN MOSQUE SIEGE

¶1. LEAD STORIES: Most Thursday morning papers front-paged a panel discussion among the heads of seven main political parties in Tokyo on Wednesday one day before the official start of the campaign for the July 29 Upper House election.

¶2. "Storming of Mosque: The Danger of Relying on Force" The liberal Asahi editorialized (7/12): "The crisis at the Red Mosque in Islamabad came to a tragic end, with more than 60 fatalities.... After 9/11, Pakistan ended its support for the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and shifted course to cooperate with the US-led war on terrorism. It is a matter of course that the Pakistani government cannot allow radicals to have free rein in Islamabad. The question is whether the government's response was appropriate.... The government shut off the supply of electricity and water to the mosque immediately after the students barricaded themselves inside. It could have maintained the pressure while taking the time to persuade the students to come out. Instead, the government ordered its forces to storm the mosque only seven days after the crisis began.... Public criticism of Musharraf has been rising, making it no longer certain that he will be reelected in a presidential race slated for later this year. Should the political situation in Pakistan become more unstable, this would have an adverse impact on Afghanistan and the rest of Central Asia, making it even more difficult for the international community to work together to fight terrorism."

SCHIEFFER